

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 01799 211012Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 1799

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, IR
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (AI) REACTION TO
REPORT TO CONGRESS

REF: A. STATE 41519, B. TEHRAN 1016, C. STATE 24549, D. 77
TEHRAN 0551 E, 77 TEHRAN 10482, F. 77 LONDON 2424

SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS NO PUBLISHED AI REFERENCE WHICH USES
25,00-100,000 FIGURE FOR POL PRISONERS UNAMBIGUOUSLY AS AI'S
OWN. HOWEVER, CONSTANT REPETITION OF FIGURE, MOST RECENTLY
IN 1976 REPORT (WITHOUT DENIAL), PLUS ITS USE BY AI CHAPTERS
ABROAD WHICH HAVE HAD CONTACTS WITH IRANIANS HAS LEFT GOI AND
MEDIA HERE AS WELL AS AT LEAST ONE ANTI-GOI ORGANIZATION IN
U.S. WITH IMPRESSION AI (OR ITS BRANCHES) CERTAINLY HAVE NOT
RPT NOT DISCLAIMED FIGURE. THERE REMAINS QUESTION OF AI
"INTERNAL" PAPER WHICH GOI HAS SEEN AND U.S. HAS NOT. WE DO
NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE LETTER CONTAINING "CORRECTION" IS
GOOD IDEA UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES. EMBASSY WOULD NO MIND IF
SENTENCE WERE ADDED TO REPORT QUOTING ENNALS TO EFFECT THAT AI
NOW REPUDIATES THIS FIGURE. END SUMMARY.

1. ENNALS CABLE TO DEPSEC IS SOMEWHAT INGENUOUS. WHILE EMBASSY
CAN NOT FIND SOURCE WHICH USES FIGURE 25,000-100,000 POLITICAL
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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 01799 211012Z

PRISONERS AS AI'S OWN (WE HAVE VERY LIMITED SELECTION OF AI
OUTPUT), ORGANIZATION'S CONSTANT MENTION OF THAT FIGURE
(WITHOUT DENIAL IN 1976 REPORT, REF A), HAS LEFT DEFINITE
IMPRESSION ON US AND OUR OTHER DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES THAT AI
SUPPORTS THIS FIGURE.

2. MORE IMPORTANT, IN CONTEXT STATEMENT IN REPORT (REF B AND

C) WHICH REFERS TO GOI ATTITUDES, GOI DEFINITELY BELIEVES AI SUPPORTS FIGURE. THIS VIEW OBTAINED FROM NUMBER OF SOURCES, PRIMARILY AI CHAPTERS ABROAD, AT TIME OF CONTRETEMPTS OVER ALLEGED ANTI-AMNESTY CAMPAIGN (REF D). BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE AI'S BRANCHES HAVE BEEN LESS CIRCUMSPECT THAN INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS. PUBLISHED SOURCE FOR THIS WOULD BE TEHRAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY KEYHAN OF FEB. 5, 1977 WHICH USES ALL FIGURES MENTIONED IN REF A, AND CATEGORICALLY STATES "AI SETTLED FOR THE FIGURE 100,000." WE NOTE THAT SEVERAL U.S. ORGANIZATIONS BELIEVE AI CONSIDERS FIGURE OF 100,000 TO BE CORRECT. NOV. 14, 1977 PRESS RELEASE FROM "U.S. PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE ON IRAN" CONTAINS FOLLOWING LINE, "AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS ESTIMATED THERE ARE 25,000 TO 100,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN IRAN." IF AI INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS HAS DISCOURAGED THIS ASSUMPTION, REF A IS FIRST WE HAVE HEARD OF IT. STRIKES US THAT AI, HAVING SUDDENLY BEEN TAGGED WITH FIGURES, IS A BIT LIKE POLITICAL CANDIDATE WHO MOVES UP TO THE BIG TIME AND IS ASTONISHED TO FIND INFERENCES DRAWN FROM HIS PAST ACTION BEING HELD AGAINST HIM. (WE WONDER WHAT EFFORTS AI HAS EXPENDED TO CLARIFY TO OPPOSITIONISTS SUCH AS "U.S. PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE ON IRAN" THAT 100,000 IS NOT AI'S FIGURE.)

3. MORE SENSITIVE QUESTION WHICH IS marginally RELATED TO POINT AT ISSUE IS QUESTION OF AI'S "CAMPAIGN" AGAINST IRAN. EMBASSY IS GIVING SUBJECT FULL-SCALE DRESS TREATMENT IN AIRGRAM BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT AND LONDON FEBRUARY 23, BUT BASIC CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TEHRAN 01799 211012Z

PROBLEM IS THAT GOI OBTAINED "SECRET", "INTERNAL" AI PAPER TITLED "ACTIONS COVERING IRAN BRIEFING PAPER," DATED AUGUST 16, 1977, WHICH IT CLAIMED SHOWED AI WAS ABOUT TO EMBARK ON A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST IRAN AND SHOWED ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF AI EVIDENCE FOR CHARGES AGAINST GOI. AI DECLINED TO SHOW U.S. OR UK REPRESENTATIVES THIS DOCUMENT (REF F), AND WE HAVE ONLY SEEN PARTIAL QUOTES FROM IT. IT IS POSSIBLE AI REFERRED TO POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THAT PAPER, AND IN ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE THAT THIS IS NOT SO, PLUS EXTENSIVE GOI USE OF 100,000 FIGURE, BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE VERY PRUDENT.

4. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, WE DO NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE LETTER CONTAINING "CORRECTION" IS CALLED FOR. REASON FOR GOI'S IRRITATION WITH AI IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTANDING WHY GOI IS STAND-OFFISH. AI HAS DONE NOTHING TO DISCOURAGE USE OF 100,000 FIGURE WHILE AI BRANCHES HAVE PROBABLY USED IT IN PAST, THOUGH PERHAPS WITHOUT INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTER'S AUTHORIZATION. RECOMMEND DEPT HOLD UP ANY STATEMENT IF POSSIBLE UNTIL IT HAS DIGESTED TEHRAN'S FORTHCOMING AIRGRAM. THEN, IF IT SEEMS USEFUL TO DO SOMETHING, PERHAPS SENTENCE COULD BE ADDED TO SUBSEQUENT EDITIONS OF REPORT. THIS COULD QUOTE ENNA'S TO EFFECT THAT AI WAS IN FACT MERELY REPORTING OTHERS AND DOES NOT ITSELF

AGREE WITH THESE FIGURES. THIS WOULD BE HELPFUL TO US HERE,
AND WOULD CONSTITUTE AN OLIVE BRANCH ON ISSUES WHERE GOI
PERCEIVES AI HAS BEEN LESS THAN HONEST, IF NOT DOWNRIGHT MIS-
CHIEVOUS.
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